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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000787

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PMIL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT CONTE DIES, MILITARY ELEMENTS LAUNCH
COUP D'ETAT

REF: A. CONAKRY 0568

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0588

[1](#)C. CONAKRY 0620

[1](#)D. CONAKRY 0739

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4
B AND D

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. At 02:00 on December 23, the Guinean Government announced that President Conte had died the previous evening. Shortly thereafter, Embassy began receiving reports of military elements launching various operations. By 07:30 it was clear that members of the so-called 19th promotion, within the military, had launched a coup attempt. A military spokesperson announced that they had seized power and suspended the constitution. It is as yet unclear whether or not the 19th promotion has been able to successfully seize and consolidate power. Conakry is relatively quiet and calm, and there have been no reports of casualties despite a significant military presence. The situation remains fluid and Embassy continues to monitor events closely. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) At approximately 02:00 on December 23, Aboubacar Sompore, the President of the National Assembly, announced over national television that President Conte had died the previous evening. Accompanied by Prime Minister Souare and the Minister of Defense, Sompore called for the Supreme Court to uphold Guinea's constitution, which names the President of the National Assembly as the constitutional successor to an elected president. The PM asked that the military maintain the country's security, especially at its territorial borders. The PM also announced that the country would observe 40 days of national mourning.

[1](#)3. (S) Following the official broadcast, Embassy officers began to receive multiple reports of military movements in various parts of the city. Elements of the so-called 19th promotion, which have been plotting a coup d'etat for the past three months (reftels), told DATT that they planned to launch their operation. At 04:00, Embassy received reports that Red Berets (presidential guards) had taken control of Castro Bridge, which controls traffic flow into and out of downtown Conakry.

[1](#)4. (S) At 05:40, approximately 30 military troops stormed Radio Television Guinean (RTG) headquarters, which is located directly across the street from the Embassy. Some of the soldiers were later identified as members of the 19th promotion. They maintained control of the building until approximately 07:45 when they reportedly left for a second RTG building because the broadcast equipment in the first building was not working properly. The soldiers generally let traffic flow freely on the road, although they were armed with rocket propelled grenades and machine guns. At 06:35, contacts within the 19th promotion

confirmed to DATT that they had launched their plan to take over the government.

15. (U) At 07:30, a military spokesperson identified as Captain Moussa Gadiss Camara announced that the military had seized power and was suspending the constitution. He declared that the National Assembly and the current government, including the prime minister, were being dismissed. He declared the suspension of all political and union activity. Camara said that the military would be establishing a transition council, comprised of both military and civilian representatives, the composition of which would be detailed later in the day. He emphasized that the new government plans to fight rampant corruption. Camara said that an ethnically balanced transition council would name a new prime minister to handle administrative affairs, and that the council would organize presidential elections. Continuing, Camara said that the transitional government planned to "restore the authority of the state," liberalize the media, and revise the constitution.

16. (S) By mid-morning, Embassy was receiving reports that elements of the 19th promotion had successfully seized control of three of Conakry's four military camps: Camp Alpha Yaya, Camp Boiro, and Camp Camayenne. Reports indicated that the 19th promotion also had partial control of Camp Samory Toure although Red Berets maintained control of First Lady Henriette's Conte's house, which is where she and President Conte's body are believed to be located. According to contacts, the 19th promotion has arrested all but two of Guinea's military generals and have sent out teams to search out other "targets," including the prime minister, Conte's wives, current ministers, controversial business figure Mamadou Syllah, and high-level officials from the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP).

17. (S) A contact told DATT that the coup plotters had sent a delegation of accountants, accompanied by armed guards, down to the Central Bank early in the morning in order to control the flight of financial assets.

18. (S) The 19th promotion appears to have control of a significant number of troops, heavy armor, and a significant number of Red Berets. They also appear to have strong relations with officers from the police Anti-Crime Brigade (BAC) since two BAC vehicles stopped outside RTG and gave "high-fives" to the military personnel there this morning.

19. (S) As of 10:00, contacts within the 19th promotion had not revealed the name of the individual leading the initiative, nor indicated who would ultimately take control of the transitional council. They have reported that mutiny leader Claude Pivi is on their side, and under their control.

110. (S) Conversations with youth leaders indicates that the youth are well aware of what is going on, but as of yet, are distancing themselves from the military operation, despite the fact that some of them helped plan the coup. One youth leader told DATT that the 7:30 radio announcement was worrisome, and that they are not sure exactly what the military plans to implement. The youth also mentioned that the ethnic composition of the proposed transitional council could be worrisome, especially since the 19th promotion appears to consist primarily of Malinke and Forest tribes.

COMMENT

111. (S) The situation in the capital is relatively calm. The streets are quiet and although there have been some reports of gunfire, there have been no reports of casualties. Many contacts have indicated in the past that they expected the military to intervene when Conte died, and they now appear to be cautiously observing how things will play out. It is as yet unclear whether the 19th promotion has successfully seized power. Sensitive sources

indicate that other groups may not accept the proposed transitional government, and may launch their own counter initiative. The situation remains fluid and the Embassy continues to monitor events slowly. Embassy convened an EAC at 9:00, which will be reported septel. A second EAC is planned for 15:00, unless the situation necessitates an earlier meeting. END COMMENT.